



Bowman County Artists Capture the Spirit of the West

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Amid the rugged terrain and bright blue skies of southwestern North Dakota lies a community of artists who continually capture the spirit of the west in word, song, canvas and clay. In a land surrounded by true American beauty, artistic inspiration is alive and thriving in Bowman County.

Bowman County is located near the scenic Theodore Roosevelt National Park and includes the communities of Rhame, Bowman, Scranton and Gascoyne. The unique beauty of this area has generated an impressive arts following that is largely supported by local residents. Many authors, photographers, painters and sculptors left the area only to return years later to where their artistic inspiration was first ignited. Still others planted new roots when they chose to retire in Bowman County. The reasons for moving all share a common theme – Bowman County is a little piece of heaven.

Sarah Snavelly is a Bowman native who spent 10 years going to school and working in Minnesota before returning to Bowman County. "I was tired of the urban sprawl mentality and wanted to live in a place with more personality," she says. And that's exactly what she found when she returned to North Dakota.

Snavelly is a sculptor who transfers her love for animals into her artwork. She draws inspiration from her three retired racing greyhounds and primarily creates greyhound sculptures. She sells her artwork all across the United States via the internet (www.artofthegreyhound.com) and traveling showcases. "I'm lucky because I get to travel and go to where the people are, but I get to

come back and live where I love," she says.

Snavelly recently became the director of the newly renovated Bowman Library. "We think of the library as the community living room and we made sure there was room to display artwork," Snavelly says. The library sponsors about one show per month and themes have varied from children's artwork from local schools to a motorcycle showcase in



Sarah Snavelly draws inspiration from her favorite animal, the greyhound.

August in honor of the annual Sturgis Rally in South Dakota. The artwork and photography of local artist Cris Fulton, another individual who returned to Bowman County to pursue her art, was on display throughout the month of November.

Fulton is a Bowman native who has lived in South Dakota, Minnesota and even Taos, New Mexico. She has always been inspired by her surroundings and began her artistic career by creating American Indian pastels and black and white cowboy drawings. Photography is an area that Fulton also has a passion and a talent for and specializes in nature photography.

"When you see a beautiful sunset it happens so fast, but you want to share it with people; art is a way to do that,"

Fulton says. She will be sharing some of the most beautiful images of Bowman County through a 2007 calendar being made in honor of the upcoming Bowman County centennial celebration. She created the calendar with



another local artist whose family ties brought her to southwestern North Dakota.

Colleen Kelly was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, but grew up hearing tales of life in Bowman from her father and grandmother. When she came across old family photos a few years ago, she traced her roots back to Bowman and was reunited with relatives. Kelly and her husband soon moved to Bowman to retire and she has spent her time volunteering at the Pioneer Trails Regional Museum and researching the history of Bowman County.

In anticipation of the centennial celebration, Kelly has been writing a book on the founding of Bowman. Kelly and Fulton collaborated on the calendar which features historical facts and photos researched by Kelly and contemporary photos by Fulton showing how Bowman County has evolved throughout the years. "The calendar has been well received," says Kelly. "So many people have said how thankful they are that we are willing to work on these projects; I can feel they appreciate it and are thankful."

Doug Burtell has embraced the western heritage of North Dakota. He sketches and paints animals, branding scenes and outdoor scenery. As a World War II veteran, Burtell has created sketches from memory of his time served with the North Dakota National Guard 164th Infantry.

Burtell was introduced to Bowman County in 1960 when he came to the area to hunt. He returned every year and grew to prefer the climate and scenery he found in western North Dakota compared to his previous home in Fargo. With his daughter also living in Bowman, he chose to move to the area to retire. In his early 80s, Burtell continues to support himself by selling paintings and greeting cards that carry his work, as well as by painting some very interesting items: emu and ostrich eggs, wooden stirrups, cream cans, buffalo heads and steer horns.

Marsha Lehmann is another Bowman native who moved to Bismarck only to return to her roots ten years later. A painter who works mainly in oil with some drawings in pencil, she is rarely seen without a camera by her side as she often creates paintings from the moments she captures on film. These moments can include working dogs with sheep and cattle, wildlife upon the plains, rodeo scenes and everyday ranch life. Lehmann is proud of the arts commu-



The 2007 centennial calendar highlights historic and present-day Bowman County.

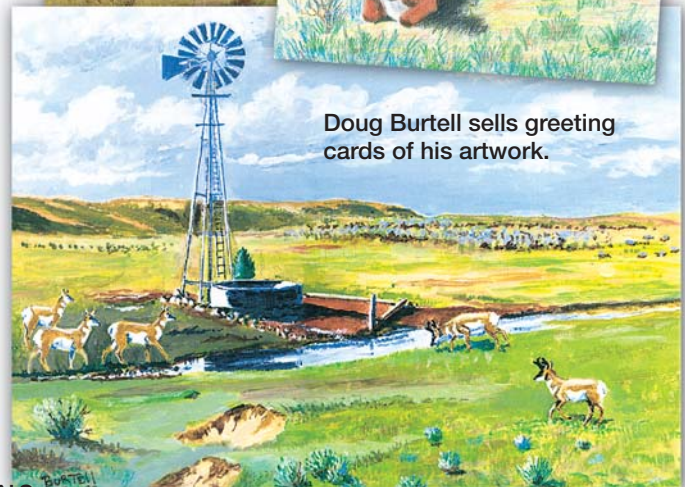
nity in the Bowman County area and is a strong supporter of local artists. Images of Lehmann's art, as well as links to other local artists and venues, can be found on her website – www.marshalehmann.com.

The quiet beauty of Bowman County has attracted many artists to the area but it is the support of the communities that keep them there. Many forms of art are thriving in the area, including western poetry, community choir, local musicians, woodcarving, theatre and quilting. The outstanding support for the arts has contributed to the improvement of the museum and library, two impressive aspects in these rural communities.

For more information on the arts in Bowman County, contact the Pioneer Trails Regional Museum at 701-523-

3600 or at www.ptm.org or the Bowman Library at 701-523-3797 or www.bowmanlibrary.org.

Sarah Snavelly is the recipient of a Fellowship Award in 2006, and the Bowman Public Schools have received the Artist-in-Residence grant, both from the North Dakota Council on the Arts. For more information about the North Dakota Council on the Arts and its programs that support communities across the state, call 701-328-7590 or visit its website at www.discovernd.com/arts.



Doug Burtell sells greeting cards of his artwork.